

**LOUDOUN COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE
INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN**

**Subject: Cooking Grills on Balconies and Liquefied
Petroleum (LP) Gas Storage**



Cooking Grills on Balconies

A sure sign of the summer season is the smell of food being cooked on the outside grill. In the interest of fire and life safety, the Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office advises that restrictions apply to the use of these devices when they are located in multi-family residential structures.

The Loudoun County Fire Prevention Code provides that all "open flame" cooking grills, to include gas or charcoal grills, hibachis or similar types of cooking devices, shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within fifteen (15) feet of any combustible construction. This prohibition is intended to help avoid the accidental ignition of a combustible surface, such as a wooden deck or balcony, by hot embers falling from the fire box. The fifteen (15) foot separation is required to lessen the chances of igniting combustible walls or the balcony above in the event that a flare-up occurs from the device.

A multi-family structure is any apartment building or condominium style of building where ownership or tenancy is restricted to an individual room or unit and where no fire wall divides or separates the individual room or unit. A fire wall is typically a masonry or double thickness gypsum board separation that runs the full height and width of the individual unit and continues into and sometimes through the roof line, providing a continuous barrier against fire spread from one unit to another. Typical multi-family structure design does not use such fire wall separation and can usually be identified by a "common attic" over several units. Another "rule of thumb" that can be used here is whether the owner or occupant is directly responsible for the upkeep of the lawn area. Typically, the presence of a "common area" lawn indicates a multi-family structure, and the grill restrictions would apply.

The region, to include Loudoun County, has experienced several disastrous fires in multi-family structures over the years where cooking

fires on balconies and decks have gotten out of control and have spread to the neighboring residential unit. The causes have ranged from fires involving excessive accumulations of grease, which have increased the intensity of the cooking fire, to fires caused by charcoals that have fallen or been wind driven from the grill without the occupant's knowledge.

Certain lease agreements and homeowner association regulations also place restrictions on the use of open flame cooking devices and, in some instances, add requirements that are more restrictive than the Loudoun County Fire Prevention Code. Residents are advised to become familiar with the rules within their community.

Additionally, the Towns of Leesburg, Purcellville and Lovettsville require the posting of regulations on multi-family structures to remind residents of the restriction of these cooking devices on balconies.

This regulation applies to commercial and institutional or health care facilities in addition to multi-family residential structures.

Storage of Liquefied Petroleum (LP) Gas Containers

In addition to these restrictions on the use of open flame cooking devices, similar restrictions apply to the storage of Liquefied Petroleum (LP) gas containers in multi-family residential structures. Any storage container that exceeds a water capacity of 2.5 pounds shall not be located on combustible balconies or within ten (10) feet of combustible construction. This type of container would be associated with small tabletop or camping grills. The "traditional" LP gas grill container that is sold with a gas grill unit or exchanged at various locations throughout the County (also known as a "20 pound cylinder") exceeds this quantity limit and must be stored according to this regulation.

Violations of these requirements may result in a conviction as a Class 1 Misdemeanor which carries a penalty of up to one (1) year in jail and a fine of up to \$2,500.00.

Questions may be directed to the Fire Marshal's Office at 703-777-0333 during normal business hours, or you may access this information by navigating to the "Fire Marshal" section on the Loudoun County website: www.loudoun.gov